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**Regional cooperation**

## Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

### Report of the Secretary-General**

*Summary*

The impact of the global economic and financial crisis and the persistent volatility in the prices of commodities have made sustained economic growth and development a greater challenge in most developing countries. Some of the positive trends in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals during the economic boom years (2002-2008) are being reversed.[1] As a result, an additional 63 million people are falling hungry as a result of the current crisis. The preceding food and fuel crises also had a significant effect on the Millennium Development Goals, particularly on targets related to poverty and hunger.

Progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is mixed and uneven. Progress has been made towards some of the goals and related indicators, while others are lagging behind. Similarly, uneven progress is being made in different countries and across the various regions. Within countries, striking disparities exist between rural and urban areas and among different segments of the population.

The global recovery has evolved so far better than expected, but is proceeding at different speeds in the various regions. The unprecedented policy responses, including the massive fiscal stimuli packages that were used to counter the deep downturn, are proving to be effective. The report highlights a number of lessons learned from the various policy responses to the crisis. Strengthened regional and

* E/2010/100.

** The report was submitted after the deadline owing to the need to reflect the outcome of the regional commission sessions, the last of which ended on 1 June 2010.

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combined impacts of the recent crises. The dynamic performance by the emerging economies, compared with that of the developed countries in the years to come, make South-South cooperation an important element for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to apply the lessons from the combined crises, the Governments of the different regions should strive to continue producing coordinated, participatory and mutually informed policy responses. This is particularly critical to adequately manage the exit strategies from the stimuli packages in terms of timing and exit areas to avoid further impacts from the crises, including on Millennium Development Goal achievement.

The present report is submitted to the Economic and Social Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV). In the first chapter, the report examines the progress by different regions in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the lessons learned from the crisis to address fallbacks and accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It also highlights how South-South cooperation, strongly supported by the regional commissions, is being used to advance the development agenda and the efforts and progress in promoting the agenda of gender equality and empowerment of women. The second chapter of the report covers developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation, including other policy matters addressed during the regional commission ministerial sessions, further efforts to promote coherence at the regional level, including through the Regional Coordination Mechanism convened by the regional commissions, as mandated by the Council, as well as ongoing interregional cooperation among the commissions.

[1] The data and analyses contained in the report are mainly obtained from sources provided by the five United Nations regional commissions. They are complemented in some cases by global sources from various United Nations entities and by the Bretton Woods institutions. For a complete list of sources visit the following website: www.un.org/regionalcommissions/MDGs.html.

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# I. Regional perspectives on the global agenda

## A. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

**Millennium Development Goals**:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

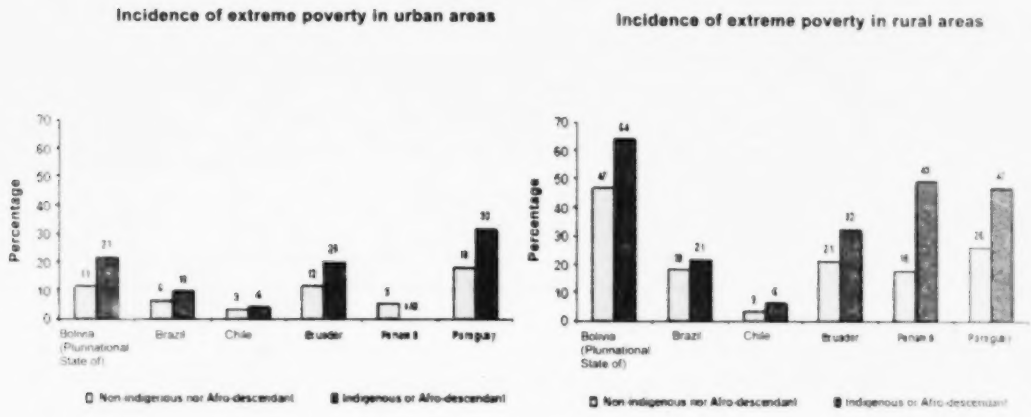
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

### 1. A regional overview

1. Most global, regional and national assessments indicate that progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is mixed and uneven. Good progress has been made on some of the goals and related indicators, while progress has been lagging towards others. Similarly, uneven progress is being made in different countries and across the various regions. This mixed performance is not only true interregionally, but also intraregionally and often within the same country, with striking disparities between rural and urban areas and among the different segments of the population. An example of this is the comparison of the incidence of poverty in rural and urban areas in Latin America and the Caribbean (see figure I).

Figure I

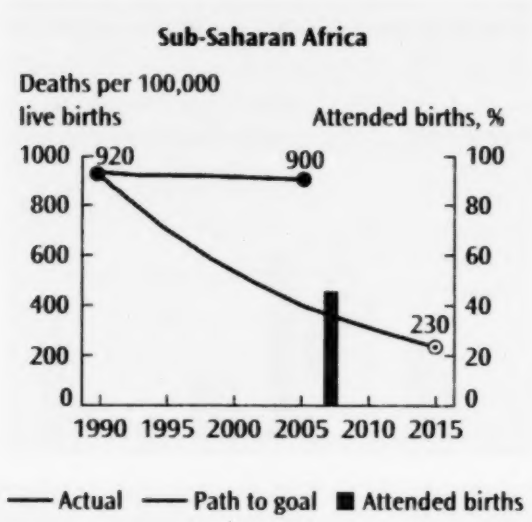
**Latin America and the Caribbean (seven countries): extreme poverty in urban and rural areas and according to the ethnic origins of the population, circa 2007**

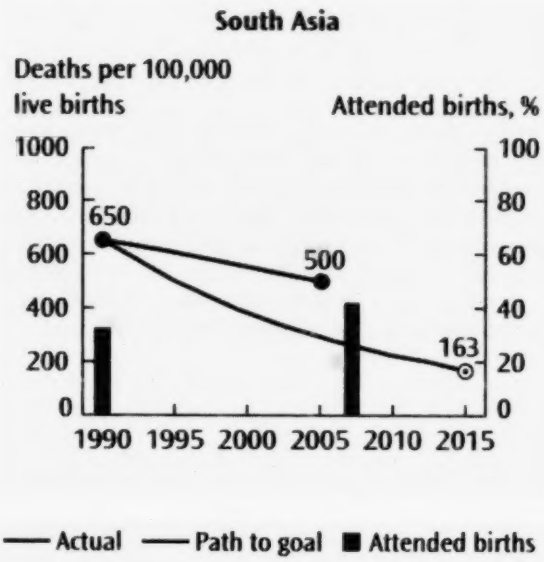



*Source:* Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, based on calculations derived from public surveys in the respective countries.

2. Even before the food, fuel and economic crises, progress towards certain goals and associated targets had been insufficient across most regions, particularly regarding maternal health, environmental sustainability and access to sanitation facilities. Prospects are gravest in maternal health. Each year, half a million women die from pregnancy-related causes and 85 per cent of maternal deaths are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia (see figure II). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest maternal mortality ratio at 900 deaths per 100,000 births, which is twenty times greater than the mortality ratio in Europe and Central Asia.

Figure II




*Source*: annex to the *Global Monitoring Report 2009*, World Bank.

3. In addition to this, significant socio-economic disparities are persistent in many developing countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, and exclusion of vulnerable groups and populations, such as women, youth, the indigenous people and rural communities are common. There is a disproportionately high level of unemployment among the young, particularly in Africa and the Arab region, including the 14 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) member States. Promoting youth employment and gender equality in the labour market are key factors to enhance long-term growth and promote political stability. Therefore, it is important to devise and effectively apply an "agenda for development with equality" based on, among others, macroeconomic policy for inclusive development as proposed by the regional commissions and other United Nations system agencies.

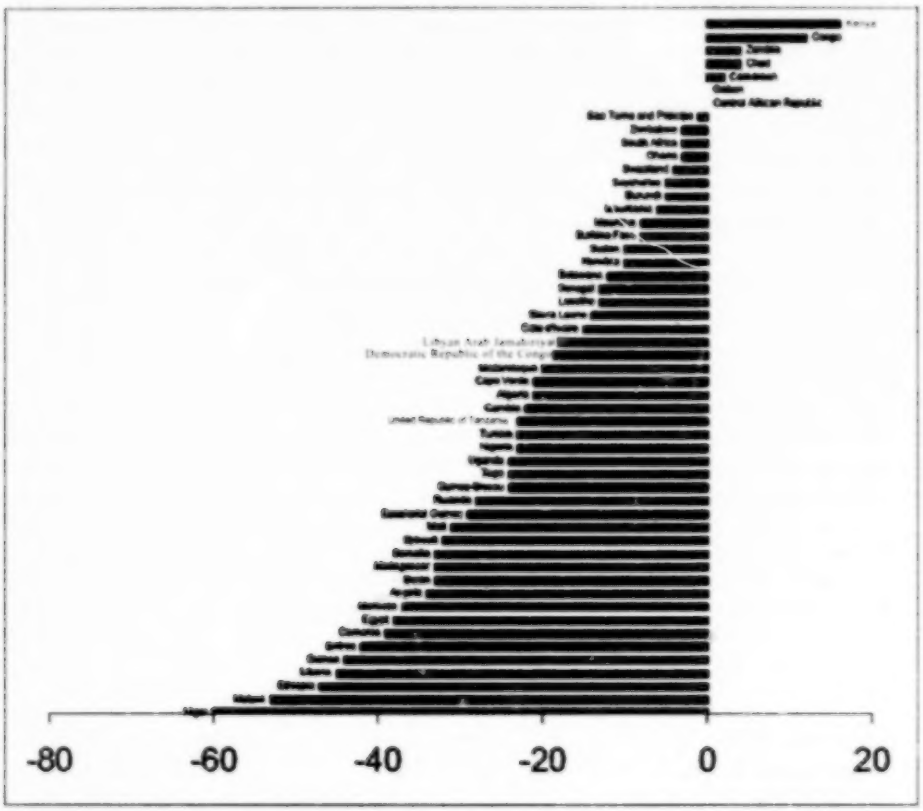
## 2. Status of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in the regions

4. The subregion that is lagging behind on all counts, including poverty reduction, is sub-Saharan Africa. As a region, Africa is often portrayed as lagging on the Millennium Development Goals relative to other regions. The current data up to 2007 confirms this view. However, this broad brush ignores the significant achievements individual countries are making towards the goals and the scale-up opportunities that this provides. Overall, data gathered by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) shows that African countries have maintained a steady, albeit slow, progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, particularly regarding the following indicators: increasing primary education enrolment, gender parity, reducing malaria and tuberculosis, combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and reducing the under-five mortality rate.[2] Cumulatively, the number of adults and children newly infected with HIV has dropped by 17.4 per cent between 2001 and 2008.

5. The under-five mortality rate has declined by 21 per cent from 168 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 132 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008. However, progress in reducing the under-five mortality rate varies enormously by country. The best performing countries appear on the left-hand side of the figure below and the least performing countries are on the right-hand side. Niger performed the best in reducing the infant mortality rate, while Kenya is the least performing country, followed by Cameroon, Chad, Congo and Zambia. In sum, the rate of progress in the region in reducing the under-five mortality rate continues to be insufficient.

[2] See regional commissions website: www.un.org/regionalcommissions/MDGs.html.

Figure III
**Progress (percentage change) in infant mortality rate between 1990 and 2007**




*Source*: ECA calculations based on United Nations Statistics Division data, as updated in July 2009.

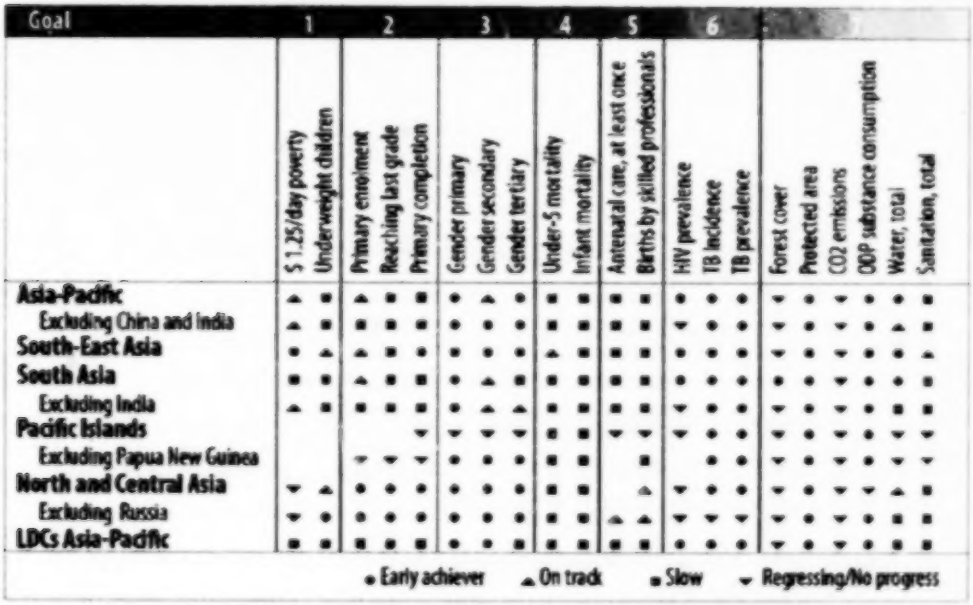
6. Limited progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality, poverty and hunger in Africa. Though data remains inadequate to precisely assess progress on this target, available data suggests that this region continues to have the world's highest maternal mortality rate. Based on trends observed from 1990 to 2005, and unless significant interventions are implemented, the majority of African countries will not meet this target by 2015.

7. Unfortunately, Africa as a region has not shared in the global success in reducing poverty, even though average incomes in the region have risen. Some countries, such as Ghana, are making progress on poverty reduction (Ghana has already met the target) but the region as a whole will not meet the target of poverty reduction by the target date. In 2005, the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty in Central, East, Southern and West Africa, using the $1.25 per day poverty line, was 51 per cent compared with 3 per cent in North Africa. North Africa also witnessed an increase in the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty, rising from 3 per cent in 1990 to 4 per cent in 2005.

8. Prior to the economic crisis, Asia and the Pacific had been making impressive gains. The region as a whole is an early achiever for a number of indicators: reducing gender disparities in primary and tertiary education; stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis; and halving the proportion of people living below the $1.25 per day poverty line. This progress is heartening, but these regional aggregates inevitably mask considerable variations between subregions and country groupings. Among the subregions, the greatest advances have been in South-East Asia, which has already achieved the targets in 11 out of the 21 assessed indicators, and is on track for another four. Next in place are the North and Central Asian countries that as a group have already achieved the targets regarding nine indicators. South Asia has also made good progress on eight indicators, but is moving slowly with respect to many others. As a group, the Pacific Island countries have been less successful — regressing or making no progress in 11 indicators and advancing only slowly in another two, those for infant and under-five mortality (see figure IV).

Figure IV

**Country groups on and off track for the Millennium Development Goals**




*Source*: *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an Era of Global Uncertainty, Asia-Pacific Regional Report 2009/10* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.F.10).

*Note*: Asia-Pacific refers to the 55 developing members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

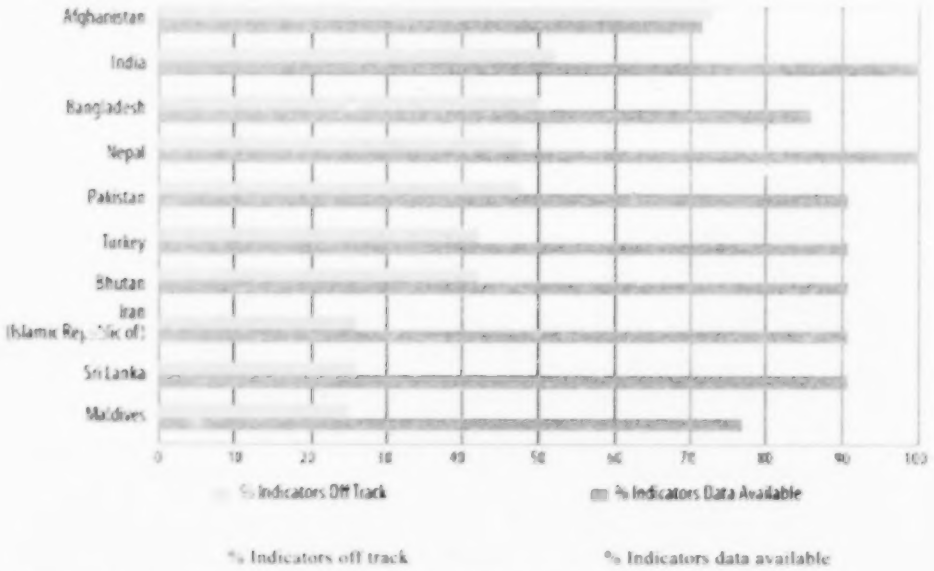
9. Progress in eradicating poverty remains one of the Asia-Pacific region's greatest successes. Between 1990 and 2005, Asia and the Pacific reduced the number of people living on less than $1.25 a day from 1.5 billion to 979 million — all the more impressive given that over the same period, the region's population increased by some 800 million. The greatest poverty reduction occurred in East Asia and is largely attributable to China.

10. However, even this good progress will not be sufficient to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The Asia-Pacific region has been slow in reducing hunger, ensuring that girls and boys reach the last grade of primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and providing basic sanitation. The Asia-Pacific region includes the world's two most populous countries — China and India — so the region's overall achievement on poverty, as on other indicators will be swayed by their performance.

11. The data for South and South-West Asia are set out in figure V. All of the countries, except Afghanistan and Maldives, have reported on more than 80 per cent of the 21 indicators assessed. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are off track in 50 per cent of the indicators — making slow progress on child mortality, for example, and none on health. Uzbekistan is in a better position, but on poverty has actually regressed: between 1998 and 2003, the proportion of people below the poverty line increased from 32 to 46 per cent.

Figure V

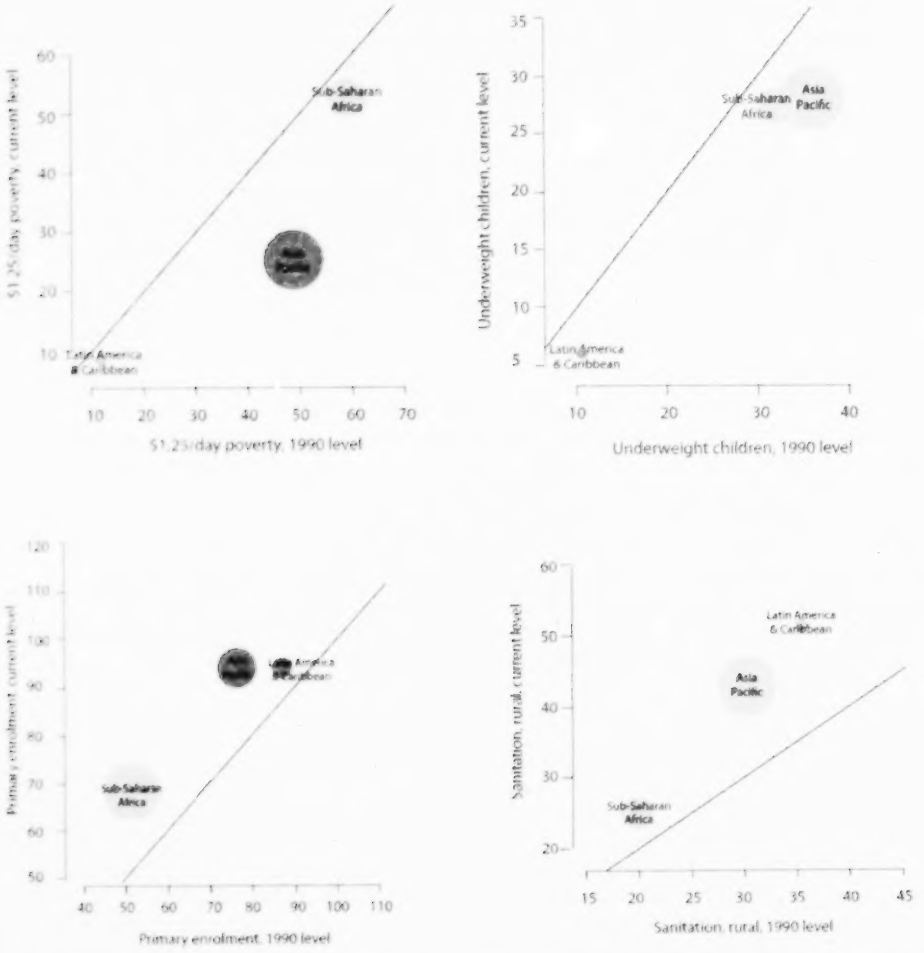
**South and South-West Asia, proportion of reported indicators for which countries are off track**




*Source: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an Era of Global Uncertainty, Asia-Pacific Regional Report 2009/10* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.F.10).

12. The Asia-Pacific region as a whole has made more progress than sub-Saharan Africa, but less than Latin America and the Caribbean. It lags behind sub-Saharan Africa only on under-five children under weight, and is behind Latin America and the Caribbean on most indicators — coming close only in the case of primary enrolment (see figure VI).

Figure 6
**Asia and the Pacific compared with sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean**




*Source: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an Era of Global Uncertainty, Asia-Pacific Regional Report 2009/10* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.F.10).

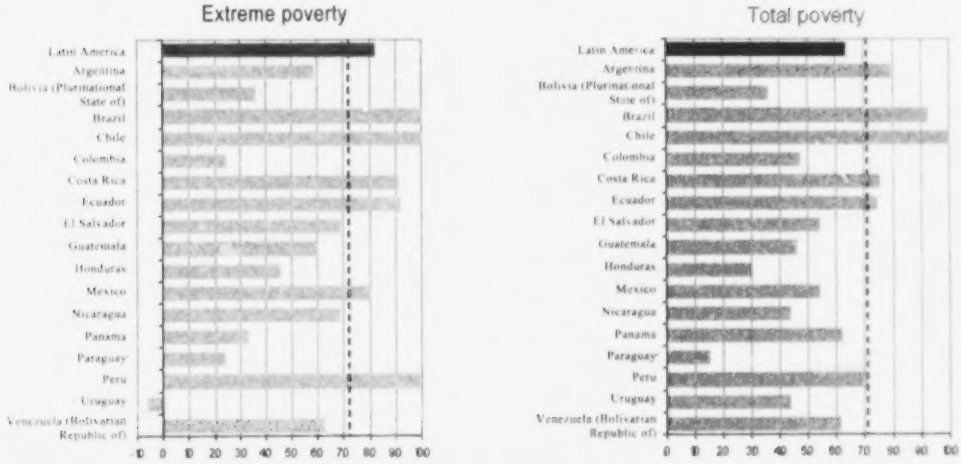
13. Since 1990, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have made great strides in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty indicators have improved significantly in the region. In 2008, the region had made 85 per cent of the gains required to meet the target set for extreme poverty — measured on the basis of poverty lines that are comparable among the countries of Latin America. Between 1990 and 2008 extreme poverty fell from 22.5 per cent to 13.7 per cent of the total population, or from 93 million to 71 million persons, in 20 countries of Latin America. Until the economic and financial crisis, Latin America was thus on the way to achieving the poverty reduction target. In terms of fighting hunger, progress has been significant at the regional level, albeit too slow: at current rates, hunger will not be cut in half by 2015. Many countries have not yet been able to achieve universal primary education, and at the regional level, this Millennium Development Goal target will not be achieved at the current pace. Important progress has been made in child mortality rates, but half the countries in the region have not shown enough progress to achieve the goal by 2015.

14. In sum, significant progress has been made in the Latin American and Caribbean region towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The speed of progress in halving extreme poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean was adequate up to 2008, while there was some progress in terms of reducing hunger. Nevertheless, the region as a whole is off track regarding maternal mortality and, despite progress in access to water and sanitation, there are significant gaps, particularly in rural areas.

15. Moreover, the overall success of the region needs to be qualified and examined carefully. While some countries, namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru, have made very significant progress or have in fact already achieved the poverty reduction target, others, such as the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay, have seen a lower rate of decline in extreme poverty than that required for them to reach that target in the coming five years, which makes it nearly certain that they will not do so (figure VII). In addition, a larger number of countries, including the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay, will still have a very high level of extreme poverty (close to or above 20 per cent) even if they do attain the poverty reduction Millennium Development Goal target.

Figure VII
**Latin America and the Caribbean: percentage of progress in reducing extreme poverty and total poverty, 1990-2008**

(Progress expressed in percentages)



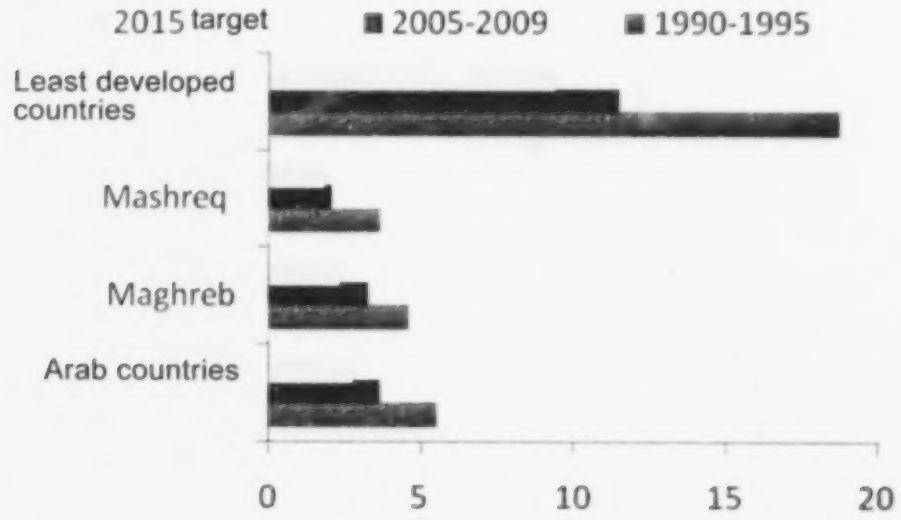

*Source*: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean based on public surveys conducted in the respective countries.

16. Regarding the countries of the Caribbean, official data based on the US$ 1.25 per day and US$ 2 per day thresholds indicate that five countries (Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago) hold somewhat more than 75 per cent of the Caribbean's population and a large portion of the extremely poor population. Poverty estimates based on national poverty lines indicate that, in the early 2000s, 88 per cent of the extreme poverty and more than 80 per cent of total poverty in the subregion were concentrated in these five countries.

17. Since adopting the Millennium Development Goals, the Arab region, including the 14 ESCWA member countries, has achieved progress in many areas, including significant strides in health and education. However, while most countries in the region are on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goal targets, the Arab least developed countries and Palestine lag significantly behind, making it unlikely that they will be able to meet the majority of the targets by 2015.

18. On poverty reduction, the Arab region has shown success mainly in reducing the proportion of the poorest of the poor, although the remarkable progress in poverty reduction observed based on the $1.25 line is not observed with the $2.00 and higher poverty lines (figure VIII). As a significant high proportion of the population of the region is clustered not far above the $1.25 line, such population is more vulnerable to economic shocks and other crises.

Figure VIII
**Proportion of people living on less than $1.25 a day for Arab countries and subregions**

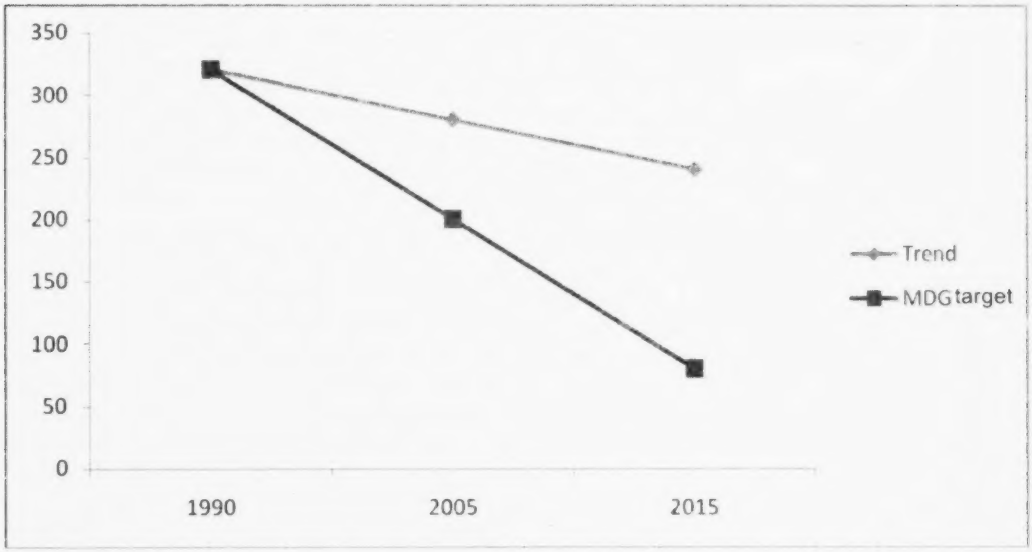



*Source: Arab report on the Millennium Development Goals (in progress); based on World Bank POVCAL data sets (in 2005, purchasing power parity) and United Nations Development Programme estimates derived from household income and expenditure survey unit record data.*

19. The Arab region has also advanced considerably and many countries are on track to achieve the access, completion and literacy rates indicative of universal primary education by 2015. Arab women have also moved closer to equality on the education front, with the gender parity index measured by the girls-to-boys gross enrolment ratio, having substantially increased at all levels of education over the period 1991 to 2005. However, despite recording the most progress of all subregions in primary education, Arab least developed countries still face a major challenge in guaranteeing girls equal access to secondary and tertiary education.

20. On maternal mortality, the overall collective estimates for the Arab region including ESCWA member countries, indicate much slower progress in improving maternal health than anticipated, i.e. reduction of maternal mortality by 75 per cent by the year 2015. This is particularly true in several countries, where long-lasting humanitarian situations, caused by armed conflicts and/or natural disasters, have significant impact on maternal mortality rates and the ability of States to cope with maternal health. Similarly, while the region has made significant progress since 1990, and is not far off track to meet the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two thirds over the period 1990 to 2015, more than 1 child in 10 dies before reaching his/her fifth birthday in the Arab least developed countries (figure IX). In addition, almost 75 per cent of the deaths before the age of 5 in the Arab region occur in the first year of life.

Figure IX
**Maternal mortality ratio: estimated trend and expected Millennium Development Goal**




*Source: Arab report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 (in progress).*

21. Based on the current trends, the Millennium Development Goals will not be fully reached in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region by the year 2015 in a significant number of countries. With respect to Goal 1, the incidence of poverty is highest in resource-poor countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. While remarkable progress was achieved over the period 2000-2008, the ECE emerging economies were particularly hard hit in 2009 by the global financial and economic crisis. In fact emerging Europe and Central Asia was the most severely impacted of any developing region in the world economy, with regional gross domestic product (GDP) declining in 2009 by close to 6 per cent.[3]

22. According to recent World Bank data, the number of poor and vulnerable in these countries rose by about 13 million in 2009, instead of falling by 15 million as expected before the crisis. Furthermore, disturbing increases in relative poverty levels that threaten social cohesion have taken place in Western Europe and the United States of America during the recent great recession and its aftermath. In addition to the higher incidence of relative poverty, an increasing number of people are falling into absolute poverty traps, characterized by severe material deprivation. Some 60 per cent of the poor population in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are estimated to be hungry or malnourished. The low-income countries such as Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova were hit by the crisis particularly hard. Thus, the progress towards achieving the Millennium

[3] Emerging Europe and Central Asia includes seven ECE countries in South-Eastern Europe, 12 ECE countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and 10 post-communist member States of the European Union (new member States).

Development Goals has not only come to a standstill but for a number of indicators there was a substantial deterioration.

23. Child mortality in the ECE region is the lowest in the world, and there is an overall trend towards achieving the related Millennium Development Goal target. In the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia countries, the child mortality rate has fallen in some cases by 50 per cent over the last decade. Nevertheless, persistently high disparities within countries are reported, both by socio-economic status and by place of residence, in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe and even in some of the new member States. Similar to child mortality, only a few countries in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region are not on track to reach the target on maternal mortality.

24. By contrast, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis are emerging as particular concerns. Eastern Europe and Central Asia is the only region in the world where HIV prevalence continues to increase and the number of HIV infections newly diagnosed in the whole European region has doubled since 2000. The continued spread of drug-resistant varieties of tuberculosis is also of great concern as its incidence has doubled since 1990 in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region. Lack of access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation also remain serious problems in many of the transition economies. This is primarily a problem in the poorest economies of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and the South-Eastern Europe regions, but is also a concern in some rural areas of the new member States. Some 50 million people in over 15 countries of the region are living in informal settlements, over 20 million people do not have access to safe drinking water and up to 50 million people do not have access to appropriate sanitation.

25. With respect to Goal 8, the advanced economies that are able to provide official development assistance (ODA) are primarily located in two parts of the ECE region, Western Europe and North America. Recent estimates suggest that major donors will not meet the 2010 ODA and gross national income targets they committed to at the Gleneagles G-8 summit. The failure to meet these ODA commitments may be partly the result of the financial crisis since historical evidence shows that financial crises often lead to a decline in foreign assistance.

### 3. Lessons learned to accelerate progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

26. Based on the analytical work by the regional commissions, a number of the lessons that were learned and measures that were applied to confront the global economic and financial crisis can also be effectively employed to accelerate progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Some of these measures are highlighted in the box below.

Box 1

**Measures to accelerate progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals**[4]

(a) Promote economic growth while making sure its benefits are distributed equitably through social protection systems and inclusive employment opportunities for vulnerable segments of the population;

(b) Adopt Millennium Development Goal-based national development plans that increase social inclusion through targeted Government interventions and fiscal expenditure on Millennium Development Goal-related priorities;

(c) Sustain fiscal expenditure to support Millennium Development Goal sustainable achievement, by augmenting Government revenue and optimizing Government spending towards Millennium Development Goal achievement;

(d) Explore innovative sources of financing, including through incentives for the private sector to make investments on Millennium Development Goal-related priorities through corporate social responsibility initiatives;

(e) Provide substantial and predictable ODA to developing countries and least developed countries in particular;

(f) Find additional means of supporting Millennium Development Goal achievement through enhanced South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation;

(g) Conclude successfully the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) grounded on the development dimensions;

(h) Diversify the economy by boosting intraregional trade through liberalized trade regimes and improving transport links;

(i) Strengthen regional coordination and cooperation to: agree on strategies to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals according to regional circumstances; coordinate macroeconomic policies to continuously adjust to the evolution of the global economic and financial crisis; carefully time and establish gradual exit strategies from the fiscal stimuli packages;

(j) Reform of the international monetary system to make it more stable and development friendly.

27. The regional commissions are actively working to strengthen regional cooperation and coordination to accelerate progress on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. As called for in General Assembly resolution 64/184, the regional commissions, with relevant partners, have held regional

[4] These lessons were drawn from the analytical work prepared by the regional commissions regarding the economic and financial crisis and its implications for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

consultations in preparation for the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, which is scheduled to take place in September 2010. Additionally, each of the regional commissions, in partnership with relevant entities, prepares regional assessments on progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in their respective regions. A list of activities and publications undertaken by the regional commissions in preparation for the meeting can be found at: www.un.org/regionalcommissions/MDGs.html.

## B. Confronting the impact of the global economic and financial crisis through regional cooperation

28. The global recovery from the economic and financial crisis has evolved better than expected, but is proceeding at a different pace in the various regions. The unprecedented policy responses, including the massive fiscal stimuli packages that were used to counter the deep downturn are proving to be effective. The multilateral and regional coordination of the responses through prompt decisions by the G-20, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and regional organizations and entities such as the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Rio Group and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the regional development banks, among others, were critical to avert the worst expected consequences of the crisis.

29. In response to the crisis, the various regions engaged in a number of coordinated measures and strategies that were outlined in the Secretary-General's report on regional cooperation in 2009.[5] These responses included emergency meetings of the finance and planning ministers in the various regions supported by some of the regional commissions, expanding the Chiang Mai Initiative, the European Recovery Plan, the establishment of the Latin American and Caribbean Summit for Integration and Development, and the recapitalization of the different regional and subregional development banks in order to raise credit lines and expedite lending procedures, among others. All of these measures have been crucial to the prompt recovery from the crisis at the global, regional and national levels.

30. There is an increased realization about the value and need for greater cooperation, coordination and coherence at the regional level to increase each country's individual coping capabilities as well as the resiliency of the region as a whole. Indeed, the regions that, overall, have fared better in the face of the crisis, such as Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, were better integrated and coordinated at the regional level than sub-Saharan African countries and some Arab and many Eastern European countries, which have been more gravely affected. Intraregional trade and domestic demand were factors that compensated, to some extent, for the decline in global trade and demand. This seems to suggest that lower degrees of regional integration could entail more vulnerability to external shocks that could, in turn, be an impediment for more stable and sustained economic growth. By tapping into the potential of South-South trade and investment, the different regions can soften the impact of the current and future economic crises through market expansion and tapping into their own resources of economic growth.

[5] E/2009/15, p. 9.

31. On the other hand, there is also evidence that open economies and regional entities that were highly integrated into the global markets such as China, the European Union, Japan and Mexico, were more severely affected by the crisis that originated in the United States because they were more exposed to the contagion channels. However, this high level of exposure and risk could have been partially mitigated through an improved and better coordinated regulatory framework and regional institutional arrangements that are commensurate with the level of regional integration.

32. Indeed, the crisis seems to have exposed a number of weaknesses in the design of free trade agreements and regional integration models. The European Union, which has attempted to create a common currency without a common fiscal system, is one such example. This failure meant that the discretionary monetary and fiscal response to the crisis was weaker in Europe than it should have been, and as a result, Europe suffered a larger decline in GDP than the United States, which suffered a much larger financial shock but was able to contain it better with more aggressive macroeconomic policy. Another institutional failure was the desire to have an integrated European capital market without the necessary agreements in place to address cross-border bank failures. As was evidenced by the crisis, there is a need to promote international consistency of banking standards, robust risk management for banks, and regulatory capital that is sensitive to risk exposures.

33. It is important, therefore, to balance the benefits of regional integration with the potential risks that it entails through adequate regional institutional arrangements and regulation that keep pace with the evolution — in terms of liquidity, depth and sophistication — of the global and regional financial and commercial markets.

Box 2

**Lessons learned from the economic and financial crisis regarding the need and value of regional cooperation and policy coordination**

In order to apply the lessons from the economic and financial crisis, the Governments of the different regions should continue to produce coordinated, participatory and mutually informed policy responses. In particular, policies should be coordinated to address the following issues: (a) macroeconomic policies to continuously adjust to the evolution of the global economic and financial crisis; (b) adequately time the gradual exit strategies from the stimulus packages because ill-timed or uncoordinated strategies could generate imbalances that could trigger another round of impacts from the crisis; (c) re-establishment of capital flows, combining access to external financing with measures to deepen domestic capital markets; (d) avoid protectionism, particularly between countries of the respective regions; (e) strengthen regional financial institutions, promoting capitalization and greater complementarity with development banks; (f) increase investment in economic infrastructure and national and regional transportation and logistics services; (g) adopt measures that are oriented to increase global, regional and domestic aggregate demand and; (h) examine current regional structures, institutions and regulations to address the weaknesses that were exposed by the crisis.

## C. South-South cooperation

34. South-South cooperation — technical, political and economic collaboration between developing countries — has for several decades been gaining ground as a complementary form of cooperation to the traditional ones. Its guiding principles, national ownership and sovereignty, solidarity, equality, mutual respect and benefit, and freedom from any conditionalities, have distinguished South-South cooperation from traditional forms of development assistance.

35. The Nairobi outcome document, as endorsed by General Assembly resolution 64/222, looks at South-South cooperation from a regional perspective, by recognizing the various regional integration initiatives and mechanisms across developing countries that have taken place, including the creation of regional common markets and the development of transport and communication networks and institutional and regulatory frameworks. In looking to strengthen and further invigorate South-South cooperation, particularly in light of the recent financial, food, energy and climate change crises, the regional commissions have been called upon by Member States to play a catalytic role in promoting South-South cooperation and in strengthening their technical, policy and research support to countries of their regions.

36. South-South cooperation is at the core of the mandate of the regional commissions to promote regional cooperation and collaboration, by providing Member States with capacity-building, data collection, and the sharing of experiences, at the regional, subregional, intraregional, as well as interregional levels, as a means of strengthening ties between countries and enhancing their respective capabilities.

37. Traditionally, the regional commissions have supported various regional integration processes since their inception. For instance, since 1975, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has provided secretariat support for the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. Participating States, in December 2009, entered into two additional agreements: the Framework Agreement on the Promotion, Protection and Liberalization of Investment; and the Framework Agreement on Trade Facilitation. Beyond trade, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has been providing support for the process of the Latin American Summit for Integration and Development, established in December 2008, through the preparation of substantive documentation for the summits and ministerial-level meetings on macroeconomic policy, trade and climate change, among others. ECA, in addition to providing support to the regional economic communities through its Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration and its newly invigorated subregional offices, is supporting countries in the region by sharing experiences in the implementation of trade facilitation and corridor management programmes across the Eastern and Southern Africa subregion, and assessing progress in the design and implementation of trade facilitation programmes within the subregion.

38. The ECE Working Party on Road Traffic Safety, as the only existing United Nations intergovernmental body dealing with road safety, has provided the region with a multilateral legal framework to ensure globally harmonized "traffic codes" and mutual recognition of vehicle certificates and driver licences in the region. ESCWA has continued to provide support to member countries on issues related to

regional integration, including the Greater Arab Free Trade Area; on foreign direct investment, financial markets and debt management; and on measures to implement the recommendations of the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Doha Declaration.

39. The regional commissions have further expanded their role in increasing countries' resilience to confront the impact of multiple crises (food, fuel, financial, climate change and HIV/AIDS). As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields of 2009 (E/2009/15), the regional commissions have been providing substantive support for policy dialogues with a view to coordinating Governments' responses to the multiple crises, across the regions.

40. To respond to the challenges of food insecurity and climate change, ESCAP further strengthened in Beijing its regional institution, the United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery, designed to be a centre of excellence in agricultural technology transfer through South-South cooperation, with the objective of promoting the development of pro-poor sustainable agricultural systems. The Centre will complement the activities of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, another ESCAP regional institution, for environmentally sound technology transfer and partnership-building with international organizations and national stakeholders. On climate change, ECLAC has supported national and regional capacity-building for the assessment of the impact of climate change, with the involvement of several centres of excellence in the region. ECLAC States have exchanged experience on the extent of the impact of climate change in the region and its implications for the environment, on mitigation and adaptation activities, as well as on opportunities for regional participation in international policy instruments in support of mitigation.

41. In collaboration with others, ECA has supported the use of geographic information systems in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Through training, capacity-building and knowledge management activities, ECA has facilitated the exchange of experience among African national mapping agencies and geographic information system technology practitioners in monitoring HIV/AIDS rates at the national and subnational level. The spread of the use of geographic information system technology has provided national AIDS programme managers with a new, clearer view of epidemiological and programme data in some African countries, and with the possibility of forging new partnerships for better understanding of current geographic patterns of HIV/AIDS infection and better use of limited national resources in the fight against the pandemic.

42. ESCWA has promoted the formulation of policies to improve the sustainable use of energy, and to foster the role of the energy network in regional integration, with a focus on the electricity and gas network. ESCWA has provided substantive support to the League of Arab States on water, energy and environment at the regional level, and promoted the exchange of experience through regional networks and associations, such as the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association and the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network.

43. On energy efficiency, based on the experience gained and lessons learned in the ECE region, the five regional commissions have worked together under the Global Energy Efficiency 21 project to assess global and regional sources of financing, national policy reforms and local capacity-building needs. Technical

assistance and policy advice were given to Member States in the design and implementation of investment projects with links to investment funds in order to establish mechanisms able to fast-track the development of self-sustained markets for energy efficiency and renewable energy and to facilitate compliance with future legally binding reduction targets for greenhouse gases. The publication *Financing Global Climate Change Mitigation* with contributions from each regional commission was released.

44. On international migration and development, the regional commissions, building on the experience of ECE in this area, are developing an information system containing an inventory of policies, programmes and legal norms worldwide and supporting the establishment of an interregional network of national and regional centres, institutions and experts from relevant national and international organizations and non-governmental organizations aimed at increasing knowledge and exchange of best practices on policy responses to migration and development challenges. Also, the five commissions are working with disadvantaged communities in transforming existing information and communications technology access points into networked knowledge hubs, involving beneficiaries in these networks and disseminating useful knowledge related to areas such as employment, education, gender and health. The activities aim at connecting and building capacity among existing and potential partners in the regional knowledge network.

45. In much of these development areas, the regional commissions are partnering with other United Nations and non-United Nations organizations to help the recipient countries in building the national and regional capacities to maximize the benefits and impact of South-South cooperation. In this respect, in the Nairobi outcome document, Member States have called upon the United Nations to identify areas where support for South-South cooperation will have the greatest impact. This call requests increased coordination and cooperation among United Nations agencies; therefore, the regional commissions are committed to continuing their Economic and Social Council mandated coordinating role in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system in supporting South-South cooperation by means of the Regional Coordination Mechanism highlighted in chapter II of this report.

## D. Gender equality and the empowerment of women

### 1. Beijing + 15 regional reviews

46. In the report on the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council noted the relevance of the regional reviews and outcomes of the regional-level intergovernmental processes in preparation for the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.[6] In response, the regional commissions prepared regional review reports and held four regional review meetings in October and November 2009, with the fifth scheduled to be held in Brazil in July 2010, covering the Latin American and Caribbean region. In March 2010, the regional perspectives in progress achieved and remaining gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration

[6] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 7* (E/2009/27).

and Platform for Action were discussed at an interactive panel held at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

47. While celebrating the progress made thus far towards implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the regional reviews emphasized the significant and diverse challenges that remain to be addressed in each of the regions. In the ECA region, the African Union has put in place a unified regional gender policy to strengthen national policies and ensure a harmonized delivery framework to accelerate implementation of gender equality commitments, complemented by subregional legal frameworks set up by the regional economic communities. Reviews of legislation are taking place throughout the region to eliminate discriminatory laws. However, these commitments need to be transformed into actions that yield results for women on the ground. The Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, at the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 15) in November 2009, in Banjul, Gambia, committed to renewing and intensifying resource mobilization efforts, improving national strategies and enhancing institutional, financial and human resources in order to accelerate the achievement of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals between 2010 and 2015.

48. The Beijing + 15 Review Meeting for the ECE region held in November 2009 revealed the substantial progress in the development of legislation addressing gender-based violence; in the improvement of the position of women in the economy; and in the development and strengthening of national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment. The remaining challenges include persisting gender wage gaps, insufficient application of gender responsive budgeting, the continuing difficult situation of migrant women and women belonging to minority groups and the effective implementation of already existing legislation for gender equality. The chairperson's conclusions, endorsed by the meeting, brought forward a number of policy recommendations, including the need to effectively enforce the legislation addressing violence against women, to combat poverty of women in rural areas and to defend the rights of women workers.

49. The High-level Intergovernmental Meeting held in November 2009 in the ESCAP region adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing + 15, which summarizes key achievements and challenges in the region. Achievements include the increased number of countries that have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the adoption of legislation to combat violence against women; the establishment of national women's machineries; the reductions in gender disparities in education; and the inclusion of gender perspectives in many national poverty reduction strategies. The Bangkok Declaration commits countries of the region to specific steps to address the persistent challenges, including high rates of maternal deaths; continued violence against women; the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls; low rates of women in leadership and decision-making in many countries; and the low status and under-sourcing of national women's machineries. The Commission, at its sixty-sixth session, adopted resolution 66/9 entitled "Full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its regional and global outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region", which inter alia, endorsed the outcome of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting, including the Bangkok Declaration, and called for a strengthening of the role of ESCAP in supporting members and associate members in this work.

50. The ESCWA Committee on Women undertook the Beijing + 15 regional review in October 2009 in Beirut. The review revealed important achievements in the area of improving women's health and education; in the promulgation of new family laws; in the reform and amendment of discriminative labour laws, personal status laws and the penal code; and in the adoption of temporary special measures to accelerate women's equality. However, the region still suffers from low rates of women's economic and political participation, and the issue of violence against women, particularly in the context of conflict-stricken countries, still needs to be holistically addressed in the ESCWA region. The Committee adopted a resolution that called for building further the capacity of national machineries for women and for increasing financial and human resources allocated to policies and programmes aimed at ensuring gender equality.

51. The eleventh session of the ECLAC Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean will take place in Brasilia from 12 to 16 July 2010. It will examine the achievements made in promoting gender equality in education; in the adoption of family and labour legislation; in increasing awareness and engagement at the highest level to combat gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS; and in the creation of national mechanisms for the advancement of women. A significant improvement in the region is the impact of pension reform policies, with increased recognition of the rights of women workers, such as domestic workers. However, challenges pertaining to women's autonomy and economic empowerment persist in the region.

52. Given the similarities and differences among regions with regard to progress and persistent challenges, greater attention should be given to both common and region-specific underlying factors. In particular, there is a need to examine and address gender stereotypes, as well as practices and traditions that impede progress in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The regional commissions are working across regions in promoting the exchange of strategies, good practices and lessons learned in order to promote social norms and behaviour patterns that are supportive of gender equality and women's empowerment goals.

### 2. Regional support for the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women

53. As reflected by the 15-year regional reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, violence against women persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality and development. To address this scourge, in 2008 the Secretary-General decided to spearhead a multi-year, system-wide campaign to end violence against women, with five regional components.

54. In this context, the regional commissions are playing a unique role, within the United Nations system, in supporting Member States in developing a set of indicators on physical and sexual violence. The development of indicators, accompanied by capacity-building and institutional development of national statistical offices, is part of a wider agenda of the regional commissions to strengthen policy development and action to address all forms and manifestations of violence against women.

55. A pilot research project conducted in 12 African countries using the African Gender and Development Index developed by ECA confirmed that Governments

face challenges in collecting data on violence against women. The African Centre for Statistics launched a major initiative with the national statistics offices to work on gender indicators within the 2010 housing and population census. In 2008, ECE established a task force in the framework of the Conference of European Statisticians to develop a common list for indicators and a methodology to measure violence against women in national population surveys. A comprehensive website on gender statistics and violence against women has been developed in collaboration with the national statistical offices in the region.

56. At ECLAC, efforts on the matter have included the development of a methodological framework aimed at the construction of indicators; the collection of data and information on legislation, programmes and public policies; and the analysis of good practices. All this information has been systematized by the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean, which has a section on physical autonomy. ESCAP held regional expert group meetings on the recommendations of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women, followed by subregional qualitative studies in the Pacific and South Asia on harmful traditions and cultural practices and violence against women. ESCWA has compiled a regional gender database from national and international sources. While the Centre for Women has been focusing on the topic of violence against women in the context of wars and conflict, groundwork has been laid for establishing "knowledge communities" on the eradication of violence against women through the operation of an e-forum that allows national machineries to share best practices and learn from each other's experiences.

57. Currently, the regional commissions have started testing a short module on violence against women in pilot countries in each region, based on a set of indicators that was approved by the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session in 2009. Outcomes of the pilot experience will provide material to be used in further capacity-building and intensifying statistical work in support of the campaign to end violence against women.

### 3. Thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

58. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2009 provided an occasion to celebrate its near-universal ratification, as well as recent progress made at the national and regional levels in implementing the Convention. The regional commissions, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, have organized regional anniversary events on the status of implementation of the Convention in the regions. Progress in the ratification of the Convention across the regions shows that the potential of its framework to shape laws, policies and programmes that affirm women's equality and challenge discrimination against women, can flourish in the environment in which there is a combination of political will and a high level of consciousness regarding the Convention and women's rights.

# II. Developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation

## A. Additional policy issues addressed by the regional commissions at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings

59. The regional commissions have actively considered most of the issues highlighted in chapter I of the present report during high-level ministerial sessions held since the 2009 substantive session of the Council. During the period under consideration, four of the regional commissions (ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC) held their annual or biennial ministerial sessions.

60. The forty-third session of ECA was held in Lilongwe, Malawi, on 29 and 30 March 2010, hosted by the Government of Malawi. The session was organized as part of the third Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The main theme of the Conference was "Promoting high-level sustainable growth to reduce unemployment in Africa". The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) actively supported and participated in the session. The discussions addressed a wide range of topics related to the nexus of growth, employment and poverty reduction in Africa, including the strategies for achieving job-creating growth in Africa; and the impact of the recent global economic and financial crisis on employment and the labour market in Africa.

61. The ministerial statement adopted at the end of the session noted that the recent global economic crisis offers African countries an opportunity to reorient their growth strategies and strengthen the linkages between growth, employment and poverty reduction in policymaking. Significant emphasis was placed on the need to scale up investments in agriculture and rural infrastructure to ensure food security and alleviate poverty; improving the climate for both foreign and domestic private investment; addressing the challenge of youth and women's unemployment; and capacity-building.

62. The sixty-sixth session of ESCAP was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 13 to 19 May 2010. The theme of the session was "Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: Promoting a stable and supportive financial system; and Green Growth or environmentally sustainable economic growth, including through technology and financing". Adoption of green growth strategies by countries in Asia and the Pacific for achieving the Millennium Development Goals was the key focus of the session. The adopted Incheon Declaration called for States to strengthen and adopt green growth strategies in response to the global economic crisis and urged Governments to use incentives to encourage the private sector to pursue more sustainable friendly practices for both existing business as well as foster the development of sustainable technologies, products and services.

63. In response to General Assembly resolutions 63/213 and 63/227, ESCAP has also organized, with the respective host Government, two regional high-level meetings on: (a) the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, which was hosted by the Government of Vanuatu in Port Vila on 8 and 9 February 2010; and (b) policy dialogue on the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries

for the Decade 2001-2010, which was hosted by the Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka from 18 to 20 January 2010. The first meeting reviewed the progress made by Pacific small island developing States in implementing the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. The second meeting reviewed progress on the Brussels Programme of Action with respect to the Asia-Pacific least developed countries.

64. ESCWA convened its twenty-sixth session from 17 to 20 May 2010 in Beirut. Two round tables on youth and capacity-building guided the session discussions. The issue of launching the ESCWA Technology Centre was also debated in detail. The first round table covered a large number of issues as they relate to youth, including: globalization, hunger and poverty, education, employment, leisure activities, the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, intergenerational issues, information and communications technology, health, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, and girls and young women and armed conflict.

65. The aims of the round table on human and institutional capacity-building were to exchange the lessons learned and best practices of member States in public sector modernization; examine the most suitable manner of ensuring the evolvement of the public sector in meeting the changing and growing demands of citizens; and discuss public sector modernization policies. As a result, ESCWA member States adopted a resolution calling for the enhancement of public sector institutions and resources to attain national development goals.

66. The thirty-third session of ECLAC was held in Brasilia from 30 May to 1 June 2010. It examined a document prepared by ECLAC entitled "Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails", which contained a broad set of proposals to help spur growth, promote productivity, contribute to greater territorial integration, generate better employment and labour institutions, and provide public goods and social protection with a clear redistributive focus.

67. Member States welcomed the proposals set forth in the document. They also requested the Commission's secretariat to develop, in collaboration with other relevant actors, a broad set of indicators to reflect the particular realities in middle-income countries of the region, so that this classification ceases to be an impediment to participation in ODA flows.

## B. Coherence at the regional level

### 1. Regional Coordination Mechanism

68. During this reporting period, and in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 (annex III), which mandated the regional commissions to hold regular inter-agency meetings in each region with a view to improving coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system, the regional commissions convened several Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings in their respective regions.[7] In accordance with usual practice, the Deputy Secretary-General chaired the main Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings in each region.

[7] For more details on the Regional Coordination Mechanism, see E/2009/15.

69. The tenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism of United Nations agencies and organizations working in Africa in support of the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme was held on 5 and 6 November in Addis Ababa. The meeting was attended by high-level representatives from the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank and United Nations agencies and organizations working in Africa.[8] The meeting noted some of the main progress and achievements as well as challenges and constraints of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in Africa and its cluster system and made several recommendations to further strengthen the United Nations system-wide support for the African Union and its NEPAD programme at the regional and subregional levels through the Regional Coordination Mechanism in Africa and its cluster system. The meeting re-emphasized that partners should realign their support for the African Union and the NEPAD programme, taking into account the strategic plans of both the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency in order to promote coherence and coordination.

70. The Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region continues to make progress as a mechanism for dealing with transnational issues that need a coordinated United Nations system response, and in linking, as appropriate, with the global agenda of the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The current work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region aims to further strengthen the function of the thematic working group structure as the operational arm of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the region. To this effect, the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region has agreed on the following: effective and efficient thematic working groups need clear objectives, committed financial and human resources and dedicated time; the terms of reference of the six thematic working groups will be regularly revisited to ensure continued relevance; a mechanism will be put in place to rotate chairs and co-chairs of the thematic working groups; time-bound "task teams" will be convened to respond to emerging issues that require a regional United Nations response; members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region should be involved in the analysis and drafting of regional reports such as the regional Millennium Development Goal report and their contributions would be appropriately acknowledged; and the thematic working groups would work on joint assessments, analysis and advocacy, as well as developing common positions for the United Nations system at the regional level.

71. On 3 and 4 November 2009, ESCWA held the first Joint Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States and the United Nations Development Group Arab States/Middle East and North Africa Region at United Nations House in Beirut.[9] The meeting discussed regional priorities, addressed the lessons learned and the challenges faced in coordinating joint activities, and

[8] The NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency was established by the African Union Assembly on 1 February 2010 as a technical body of the African Union in replacement of the NEPAD secretariat.

[9] This was the 13th meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States, the 12th meeting of the United Nations Development Group Arab States/Middle East and North Africa Region and the 2nd meeting of the expanded United Nations Development Group Arab States/Middle East and North Africa Region.

outlined the way forward to strengthen the work and role of both the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States and the UNDG Arab States/Middle East and North Africa Region. The meeting was attended by high-level representatives from regional organizations, the League of Arab States and the host Government.

72. The meeting concluded with a statement outlining three thematic priority areas for the region: (a) Millennium Declaration/Development Goals; (b) food security and climate change; and (c) youth. It also emphasized the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States and urged the consideration of a structured capacity-building programme for the League of Arab States. ESCWA was designated the convener of the Thematic Working Group on the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the meeting called for coordinated preparatory initiatives, to be led by ESCWA, for the next Arab Economic and Social Development Summit due to be held in 2011.

73. ECE convened two Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings over the period under review: one in October 2009 and the other in March 2010. These meetings have provided new impetus for the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the ECE region. It was agreed to hold annually two regular Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings: a formal session in the autumn and an informal one in the spring. These two meetings should be sequenced so as to build up a clear complementary relationship and maximize the synergies between the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States. In this respect, the meetings of the two coordinating bodies should be held back-to-back at least once a year and their agenda should be prepared through consultations between the convenors of both bodies. Furthermore, the Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings should be properly sequenced with the High-level Committee on Programmes meetings to ensure linkages between the regional and global levels of system-wide coordination in the development field.

74. Participants also agreed that the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the ECE region could create thematic working groups that would have to be substance-driven, with clear objectives in order to ensure effective results and impact. In this context, it was agreed to establish a thematic working group on climate change adaptation and mitigation, with ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme as co-chairs of this group. It was also agreed that the objective of the group will be to develop a regional action plan for climate change adaptation and mitigation. In addition, and based on a first report prepared by ECE as well as inter-agency consultations on the Millennium Development Goals, the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the ECE region decided to prepare a regional inter-agency report involving all the agencies engaged in supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ECE region.

75. The meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 17 and 18 February 2010 at ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico. The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States and senior officials from the host Government. The meeting addressed the preparations for the General Assembly High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals and the challenges of climate change in the region. It also examined the United Nations system's strategic

contribution to regional cooperation and the reconstruction of Haiti after the earthquake that affected that country in February 2010.

76. With respect to the Millennium Development Goals, the inter-agency regional report *Millennium Development Goals: Advances in Environmentally Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* was launched within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism. Within this framework, it was agreed to prepare, during the first semester, two inter-agency reports: one on the Millennium Development Goals and employment, and the other presenting a comprehensive assessment on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Based on a presentation by a high-level representative from the host country on the perspectives for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the meeting explored the best means through which the regional structures of the United Nations system could contribute with the host country of the conference in its preparatory process.

### 2. Regional Coordination Mechanism and United Nations Development Group regional teams

77. The report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields of 2009 covered the evolving relationship between the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the regional directors' teams, currently referred to as United Nations Development Group regional teams.[10] During this reporting period, the United Nations Development Group adopted its strategic priorities for 2010-2011. The United Nations Development Group strategic priorities recognized the critical role of the regional level in improving United Nations system capacity to deploy knowledge and know-how, including by translating global knowledge into regional, subregional and country contexts. Proactive action was encouraged in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations Development Group regional teams and the Regional Coordination Mechanism, in line with the United Nations Development Group Management and Accountability Framework and other United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination agreements, for providing useful knowledge and advice to United Nations country teams.[11]

78. In response to this and to an invitation by the United Nations Development Group Advisory Group, the regional commissions submitted a paper to the United Nations Development Group Advisory Group further articulating the delineated functions of the Regional Coordination Mechanism vis-à-vis the operational country-level support functions of the United Nations Development Group regional teams, and suggested specific modes of interaction between the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group regional teams in support of country development work. More specifically, the regional commissions delineated the following functions for the Regional Coordination Mechanism:

(a) Providing a high-level policy forum for exchanging views on major strategic developments and challenges faced by the regions and its subregions, and

[10] The regional directors' teams were initially known as regional managers' teams; their name changed again recently to United Nations Development Group regional teams.

[11] For more information on the United Nations Development Group Management and Accountability Framework and the relevant CEB agreements, see E/2009/15.

interaction of the regions with the global level (implemented through strategic dialogue involving the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions, other United Nations agency senior officials, and other senior non-United Nations officials from regional organizations and other partners, and through reporting to the Economic and Social Council by means of the Secretary-General's report on regional cooperation and the annual dialogue of the Executive Secretaries with the Economic and Social Council);

(b) Promoting United Nations system policy coherence in response to identified regional priorities and initiatives (Regional Coordination Mechanism thematic clusters and working groups identified);

(c) Devising coherent regional policy responses to selected global priorities, and providing regional perspectives to the global level on such issues (namely, achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; addressing climate change challenges; promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and; responding to the financial and economic crisis);

(d) Providing the forum for exchange of best practices and lessons learned and for inter-agency analysis and elaboration of inter-agency normative and analytical frameworks in response to the identified focus and priority issues above (e.g. inter-agency regional assessments on Millennium Development Goals; regional action plans on gender; promotion of green growth agenda; possible regionalization of selected CEB initiatives in response to the financial and economic crisis);

(e) Promoting joint programming on issues where regional normative and analytical work involves several agencies (e.g. regional road map for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region and ESCAP mapping of regional agency programming in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as ESCWA planned similar mapping, and the policy recommendations emanating from the annual inter-agency reports on progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Latin America and Caribbean region);

(f) Promoting United Nations system interaction with non-United Nations regional and subregional organizations (e.g. Regional Coordination Mechanism in Africa with the African Union and NEPAD; the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); the Regional Coordination Mechanism/ESCWA with the League of Arab States; the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Latin America and Caribbean region with the Organization of American States);

(g) Promoting policy coherence and joint programming in support of regional and subregional integration efforts and initiatives (e.g. the Regional Coordination Mechanism in Africa in support of NEPAD; the Regional Coordination Mechanism in Africa/subregions in support of the regional economic communities; the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region in support of the ASEAN agenda; the Regional Coordination Mechanism in the Latin America and Caribbean region in support of the Unity Summit).[12]

[12] See, for example, *Striving Together: ASEAN and the UN* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.II.F.3).

79. The regional commissions also proposed that the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group regional teams can support and strengthen each other's work through a two-way interaction: (a) the Regional Coordination Mechanism towards United Nations Development Group regional teams: on one hand, the regional issues addressed at the Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings can feed discussion at the United Nations Development Group regional teams' meetings. In particular, the outcome of Regional Coordination Mechanism work on policy coherence (conclusions of substantive debates, regional action plans, policy directions and recommendations) can be conveyed to the United Nations Development Group regional teams for their debate on country policies. It can also work with the regional teams to facilitate the integration of respective elements of regional and subregional programmes into the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in support of the country development agenda; (b) the United Nations Development Group regional teams towards the Regional Coordination Mechanism: on the other hand, the regional teams can bring national policy experiences (in terms of best practices or challenges faced) to the Regional Coordination Mechanism in order to draw lessons from these experiences at a regional level. Such lessons can thus be shared more broadly, feed new analytical/normative work and eventually lead to strengthening policy convergence at the regional level. These proposals by the regional commissions are planned to be discussed in depth soon by the United Nations Development Group Advisory Group.

## C. Enhanced interregional cooperation among the regional commissions

80. Since the last reporting period, the Executive Secretaries held three regular meetings to further coordination and collaboration among the commissions: in July 2009, at the margin of the Economic and Social Council; in October 2009, in New York at the margin of their dialogue with the Second Committee of the General Assembly; and in January 2010, which was hosted by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA in Beirut. On their agenda were many of the major policy issues addressed in the report, notably the regional commissions' coordinated actions and efforts to support United Nations system-wide coherence at the regional and global levels, as well as the substantive contributions and regional perspectives by the regional commissions to the global challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, climate change, and the continuing monitoring of the impacts of the economic and financial crisis and other prior crises, such as food and energy security, in the respective regions. These issues have been addressed in one way or another as part of the Executive Secretaries dialogues with the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee of the General Assembly, in July and October 2009, respectively.

81. In addition, a joint side event was organized in Copenhagen at the margins of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, during which the Executive Secretaries launched the regional commissions' joint publication assessing the impacts of climate change and highlighting adaptation and mitigation policy responses in the various regions.[13] This publication followed another joint publication by the regional commissions assessing the impacts of the financial crisis

[13] See www.un.org/regionalcommissions/climatechange.html.

and similarly highlighting policy responses in the various regions. The latter publication was launched in June 2009 at the margin of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, and subsequently broadly circulated at Economic and Social Council meetings in 2009.[14] Another important joint publication by the regional commissions was launched in December 2009, highlighting interregional cooperation among the commissions in the area of energy efficiency in service of their member countries.

[14] See www.un.org/regionalcommissions/crisis.html.